

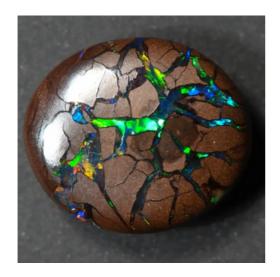
## **Boulder Opal**

Boulder opal is a unique and captivating variety of opal, known for its distinctive appearance and stunning play of colors. This gemstone is highly prized by collectors and jewelry enthusiasts for its beauty and rarity.

Boulder opal is a type of precious opal that is characterized by its occurrence within ironstone or sandstone matrix, giving it a distinctive and natural appearance.

Unlike other forms of opal, such as white opal or black opal, Boulder opal forms as thin layers or veins within host rocks, resulting in captivating patterns and colors. The opal can display a range of hues, including blues, greens, reds, and yellows, often with a play of colors that seems to dance and shimmer when viewed from different angles. This optical phenomenon is what makes opals so highly sought after and admired.

Boulder opal owes its formation to a unique set of geological conditions. It is primarily found in Australia, particularly in the Queensland region.



#### This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Boulder Opal
- Secretary's Report
- Storing a Rock Collection
- Game of Stones
- Handling Lapidary Minerals
- Atlantisite
- Rockhound Holidays
- Bench Tips

January 's Birthstone - Garnet

The opal forms when silica-rich water seeps into cracks and cavities within the host rock, usually ironstone or sandstone. Over millions of years, this silica-rich solution slowly evaporates and solidifies, depositing tiny spheres of silica gel. These spheres are responsible for the opal's ability to diffract light and create the mesmerizing play of colors.

The presence of ironstone or sandstone provides a stable matrix that helps protect the delicate opal layers. As a result, Boulder opal is often cut with a thin layer of the host rock left on the backside of the gemstone, enhancing its natural and rustic appearance.

Read the entire article at <u>GeologyScience.com</u>



Clubhouse Address: 3357 Susan Dr. Spring Hill, FL 34606

# Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 12/13/2023

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Janice Wojcik at 7:10pm.

We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

Vice President Wojcik began the meeting by saying; "I'd like to explain why I'm up here. Tonight is the end of Judith's Presidency of this club. She's been the President for 6 or 7 years and has been a spectacular President. To quote Joni Mitchell, 'You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.' She has worked her butt off and I would love for the club to give Judith a big round of applause." (Lots of clapping and whistles.) She continued "When she comes to 'Game of Stones' next month, we should all shake her hand and say thank you. Because without her, for all those years, well, we have a club because of Judith. There's no question about it."

There were 2 new members to recognize; Neil Thomas and Erica Jones.

There were 2 guests in attendance; Liz and Heidi.

Anthony Maffatone made a motion to accept the minutes of our November meeting as printed in the newsletter, Rachel Blank seconded. Passed by all members.

Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. She stated that the Gem Show report was not complete at this time.

There were 657 paying customers through the door, more than in 2022. Vice President Wojcik thanked all the volunteers who made the show possible and said the 2024 Gem Show will be even better.

VP Wojcik announced the "Game of Stones", aka "Rock Bingo", will be held at our January 2024 meeting, along with our Annual Holiday Party / Feast.

She went over some of the rules of the game, which will be included in the newsletter.

Members wishing to join in the game should bring a wrapped, rock related gift to add to the gift table. Rocks, slabs, tools, jewelry, books about rocks / jewelry are suggestions. It was suggested that there is a \$10 minimum for the gift, but no minimum has never been decided by the Board.

The Election of Officers and Board of Directors commenced at this time.
Results reported:

New President - Anthony Maffatone; New Vice President - Michael Steverson; Treasurer - Janet Wheeler; Secretary - Melodye Steverson.

Board Members elected - Ralph
Barber, Roger Wheeler, Leslie
Newberry, & Hunter Mellring.
James Roush requested to be on the
Board and if accepted, will be
appointed at the first Board meeting.

Roger Wheeler made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Michael Steverson seconded, passed by all. Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

# How to Store a Rock Collection Properly

How to store a rock collection properly is a question asked by many rock collectors.

Many amateurs have amassed minerals, fossils, or handcrafted jewelry that, collectively, add up to a small fortune.

All too often, such collections get broken up and sold for pennies on the dollar after the death of the collector.

Worst case, they end up in a landfill because kids can't be bothered with "Dad's old rocks."

What's your rock collection worth? How can you insure it against theft or damage?

What plans should you make for heirs or to otherwise transition?

Most of us are at a loss when it comes to such questions. Where to even begin?

Know what you've got and document it!

If self-collected, record the locality and date of collection.

If purchased, record when, where, from whom, and the price paid.

If trading with a fellow collector, record the transaction. "Provenance" is important in the collecting world and adds value. Keep a ledger and include a catalog number on each specimen.

On a personal note, as a member of a gem club, I receive collections for our club museum and it is a rare joy when donations come with numbered specimens and a catalog. You can build a catalog with a handwritten ledger or, better, with database software. Whatever route you choose, don't just keep loose cards with specimens. I knew a lady who lived in a rambling Victorian house and kept a Victorian-style collection—a bit of everything haphazardly placed in an eclectically cluttered funhouse. Regrettably, she stored all info on loose cards and in her head. Over the years, maids vacuumed up the cards while her memory of the specimens disappeared. This left her heirs with a superb collection much diminished in value.

If you have specimens you purchased, keep the cards that came with them but also maintain an updated rock collection catalog.

After documenting your collection, consider having it appraised. Most collections are "specimen collections" of primarily common pieces. While a fossil may be near and dear, if it's not truly world-class, it's not worth your time to appraise. Pare down and focus on stuff that is truly rare, unusual, or would be in demand in a market environment.

Per the late-great comedian George Carlin, junk is stuff we toss, but stuff is junk we keep. Assess good stuff, not junk!

Read the entire article at RockNGem.com





Please note: Our meeting will begin at 6PM, not our normal 7PM start time.

## Rules of Rock Bingo - AKA Game of Stones

Your Board has changed the rules slightly to make this game more enjoyable for everyone!

Each player, must bring at least 1 wrapped gift.

Rock related is good, it doesn't have to be expensive, but something a rockhound would like. If you want to bring more than 1, feel free.

One bingo card for each player.

Straight line bingo only – Vertical, horizontal or X.

<u>4 corners is not a bingo.</u>

When you get a bingo, you will read your numbers back to the caller to make sure it's correct.

After you're confirmed, you pick 1 present from the prize table. Take it back to your seat and place it in front of you on your table. NO hiding presents, NO opening and NO peeking!

After all the presents have been chosen from the prize table, if you get a bingo, you may "steal" a gift from someone else that is over 18 years old.

When someone gets a "cover" (all spaces on card covered) the game ends.

When the game is over, do not open your presents!!!

Any player that does not have a present at the end of the game will be allowed to take 1 present from any player over 18 that has multiple gifts.

That way, everyone who brought a gift, goes home with a gift and everyone has a good time!

We will go over these rules again before we start the game.

# 5 Tips to Handle Lapidary Minerals Safely

Knowing how to handle lapidary materials safely is important when you're cutting, grinding and polishing rocks and minerals.

Here's what's dangerous and how to be safe handling it. After 30 years of procrastination, I purchased a brand-new rock saw and grinder/polisher. Wow, did I have fun! For that first few months of cutting and grinding, I was in seventh heaven.

All those lovely rocks I had lusted after for so long were finally put under my polishing wheel: lapis, agate, jasper, tiger's eye, malachite, turquoise, chrysocolla and quartz.

But I soon began to experience a nasty and completely unexpected cavalcade of health problems: coughing, hoarseness, difficulty clearing my throat, breathlessness, and a dull ache in the pit of my lungs.

Of course, I had always worn safety glasses with side protection, as recommended in every manual, but a mask seemed a cumbersome hindrance.

As the situation worsened, I tried several dust masks, but there was little improvement. It was time to do a little research, so I hit the books and started talking to fellow rockhounds. It was a revelation.

Rock dust from lapidary work turns out to be more than just a nuisance; it can be deadly.

Among the worst offenders are minerals containing copper (II) oxide (CuO), the higher oxide of copper, which can cause damage to the endocrine and central nervous systems.

These minerals include some of our most colorful and treasured semiprecious stones: turquoise (9.8% copper oxide), chrysocolla (45%), and malachite and azurite (70%). These percentages are only close approximations; each rock has its own signature of impurities.

It is worth remembering that other closely related copper compounds are highly bioactive and have been used in pesticides, fungicides, and wood preservatives for decades. This is dangerous material.

These high-copper rocks should not be licked to bring out the color, and oil mixed with the dust should be carefully cleaned off exposed skin.

Read the entire article at RockNGem.com





### **Atlantisite**

Atlantisite is a unique and captivating gemstone that is a combination of two minerals: serpentine and stichtite.

The name "Atlantisite" is derived from the belief that the colors of the stone, green and purple, are reminiscent of the legendary lost city of Atlantis. This gemstone is primarily found in Tasmania, Australia, where the serpentine and stichtite minerals coexist in a distinctive pattern.

#### Composition:

- Serpentine: Serpentine is a group of minerals that are typically green and often associated with serpentine rocks. The green color in Atlantisite comes from the serpentine component, and it can range from light to dark green. Serpentine is known for its soothing energy and is believed to have various healing properties.
- Stichtite: Stichtite is a rare mineral that is often purple in color, contributing the second prominent hue to Atlantisite. Stichtite is associated with emotional healing and is said to promote feelings of love and compassion.



#### Origin of the Name:

The name "Atlantisite" is inspired by the mythical city of Atlantis, which is believed to have vanished beneath the sea. The connection to Atlantis is more symbolic than factual, as there is no geological evidence linking the stone to the lost city. Instead, the name reflects the vibrant and mystical qualities of the gemstone. The green and purple colors are thought to evoke a sense of mystery and ancient wisdom, similar to the allure associated with the legendary Atlantis.

#### **Metaphysical Properties:**

 Atlantisite is often associated with metaphysical and spiritual properties. It is believed to have a harmonizing and balancing effect on the energies of the heart and crown chakras.

#### **Geographical Source:**

 The primary source of Atlantisite is Tasmania, Australia. The unique geological conditions in this region have given rise to the coexistence of serpentine and stichtite, creating the distinctive patterns and colors found in Atlantisite.

Read the entire article at GeologyScience.com

# Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."

## **2024 Rockhound Holidays**

People often say there's a holiday for everything, and they're right. The good news is there are some fun holidays for rockhounds to enjoy and celebrate. Here's a handy list to jot on your calendar and enjoy through the year. Thanks to <u>RockNGem.com</u> for this calendar

#### Old Rock Day - January 7

This day is set aside (though no one knows how long it has been observed or when it was first celebrated), to consider how old the Earth is and how it has shaped our lives.

#### National Jewel Day - March 13

This special day is set aside to appreciate precious stones and jewelry. From the earliest examples of stone, bone, and shell jewelry, to the most lavish and intricate designs of today, National Jewel Day is meant to recognize them all.

#### Geologists Day - April 7

This day is dedicated to those folks who make it their life's work to explore, research and disseminate their knowledge of rocks and Earth's history. It is also the time to appreciate all of those things in our lives that we have or know because of geologists.

#### Earth Day - April 22

You can't get any "Earthier" than rocks, gems and minerals. This is a day for rockhounds to explore and to appreciate Earth's treasures.

#### Nickel Day - May 16

Devoted to the mined element, nickel, this day was created to acknowledge this important metal. Nickel has been used by humans for at least 2,000 years.

#### Dinosaur Days - May 15 & June 1

Dinosaurs lived millions of years ago, but they're top of mind today. So much is still unknown about these fascinating creatures.

#### National Caves & Karst Day - June 6

This day is dedicated to the majesty and importance of these amazing rock formations. Most people know what caves are, but few are familiar with "karst" landscapes. A karst landscape is characterized by rocky hills, aquifers, springs, sinkholes and caves.

#### World Oceans Day - June 8

Beach finds from shells to rocks, minerals and sea glass are a favorite. Celebrate the oceans that bring us this bounty.

#### International Drop a Rock Day – July 3

This a day for having a bit of fun while inspiring kindness toward others. Across the world, individuals, families, and groups of all types get creative and paint rocks with pictures, themed messages, or even advertising and hide them. Anyone can try to find them. When they are found, the lucky holder of that rock can keep it, hide it again, or if it is part of a local promotion, contact the sponsoring group.

#### International Rock Day - July 13

Sometimes referred to as World Rock Day, this day is intended to celebrate and to contemplate the importance of rocks to humankind. If there is one day per year to give rocks their due, this is it!

#### National Pet Rock Day - September 1

This tongue-in-cheek holiday is dedicated to the 1975 marketing scheme that led to the sale of over one million pet rocks. On this day, many people "adopt" a pet rock at functions planned to celebrate this phenomenon.

#### Collect Rocks Day - September 16

Held since 2015, Collect Rocks Day celebrates all of the diverse types of rocks and all of the different places they can be collected, no matter where in the world you live. It is a celebration of Earth and geology for everyone.

#### National Fossil Day - October 16

As the name implies, this day is reserved for appreciating and exploring fossils. Of the approximately 250,000 different fossilized species that have been identified, it is estimated there are millions more to be found. Many groups organize fossil hunts and expeditions on this day in early fall. Be sure to find one near you.

## Some items for sale by club members. All items are local pick up only. No shipping.



Melodye has a new, in-box Hi-Tech 6" rock trim saw for sale. \$400 407.760.4472



Melodye has a lovingly restored RayTech faceting machine for sale.
Works great.
\$900

(These normally sell for upwards of \$3000)
407.760.4472



Michelle has some marble for sale. \$25 for all the pieces.



## Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is \$10.00 per month.

Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

#### Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club freasure Janet Wheeler: cooglift(sampabay) income or send to:

Withtaccochee Rockhounds
PD 10x 8634

Spring Hill, FL 34411-6634

#### Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are \$35.00 annually for adults, and \$5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

#### 2024 Club Officers and Appointees

Anthony Maffatone 352.397.7694 anthonymaffatone@gmail.com President highlander56@gmail.com Vice President Michael Steverson 407.376.5570 melodye@designsbymelodye.com Secretary Melodye Steverson 352.683.9496 Treasurer Janet Wheeler 727.938.3644 ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com Rock Talk Editor Michael Steverson 407.376.5570 highlander56@gmail.com highlander56@gmail.com Club Webmaster Michael Steverson 407.376.5570 ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com Mailing Reporter Janet Wheeler 727.938.3644 Audio/Visual Coordinator Michael Steverson 407.376.5570 highlander56@gmail.com

Anthony Maffatone (President) Michael Steverson (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush (Appointed) Ralph Barber (Past President)



# Bench Tips from Brad Smith

#### Brad Smith's Bench Tips are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

#### **TESTING FOR SILVER**

Often you need to identify some of those unknown "silvery" pieces of metal in the bottom of the toolbox or some piece of old jewelry that is not hallmarked. Is it silver or is it something else?

Of course, if you need to know exactly what you have, it's best to send your metals off for refining. But inexpensive silver testing solutions can be used to help distinguish higher silver content alloys from alloys that have the same appearance but with little to no silver content, like German Silver or Nickel.

I purchased a half-ounce bottle of JSP Silver Testing Solution #GT41. It's not a rigorous analytic test, but it lets you know if you're on the right track. And it's inexpensive. Mine was only \$3.

With a fresh solution you have an instant reaction after applying it to the metal being tested. The procedure is simple - apply a small drop and watch for a color change. Note that the acid will leave a slight mark, so choose a spot that is out of the way or will be easy to polish.

If you suspect the object is silver plated, you should file a little notch somewhere inconspicuous to expose what metal is below the surface. Otherwise, all you test will be the surface plating.

Here's the reaction I got when testing various materials:

. Fine silver . . . . . . . Red/Orange

. Sterling silver . . . . . . Brick Red

. 80% silver 20% copper . Dark red changing to gray

. Brass . . . . . Yellow changing to blue

. Nickel . . . . . . . . . . Gray-green

. Copper . . . . . Yellow changing to blue

. Steel . . . . . . . . . . . Black

. Stainless Steel . . . . . . No color change

Caution - If you do any of this testing, know that you are handling a reasonably strong acid. The GT41 label says it includes nitric acid and potassium dichromate.

Wear safety glasses.

Do not get any testing solution on your skin.

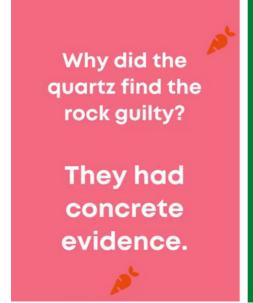
Use a solution of baking soda and water to neutralize acid.

Wash and clean up well when you're done.

### **Rock Talk Funny Papers**



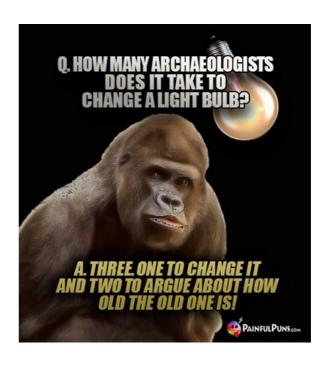














#### From The Editor

#### Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

Our December meeting was jam-packed. Leslie Newberry gave us a very interesting presentation about crystals. We also held our annual elections of Officers and Board of Directors.

For our January meeting, we will be having our annual "party" with food provided by the club. Additionally, we will be holding our always popular Games of Stones. For those of you who have been with the club for a while, we used to call this Rock Bingo. It is always a club favorite. Great fun, and everyone leaves with a rock-related item.

For all attending the meeting, be sure to bring a wrapped, rock-related item to donate for the game.

Also, membership for the new year is due. If you have not renewed your club membership, please do so. You can renew at the meeting (we take cash, checks and credit cards), or mail your renewal application in. The revised application is at the end of this newsletter.

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still are not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address. I have a few of you who unsubscribed from the mailings. I cannot add you back to the list. You have to subscribe to get back on the list. It's a permissions thing.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

#### **Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members**

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.

These are **SCAMS**.

Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

### **Rockhounds Advertisers**





















#### Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in

Rock Talk is \$10.00 per month.

Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

**Advertisers Are Needed** 

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.

The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.

Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.

Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: <a href="mailto:ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com">ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com</a> or send to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634



# Membership Form - 2024

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Hernando County FL

#### PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name			
Partner's Full Name  If both applying for membership			
Child's Full Name * If under 18, and applying with parent			
Street Address			
City			
State / ZIP			
Phone Number			
Email			
Annual Membership Dues: *Choose your type of membership		Returning Member?  New Member?	
☐ Individual Membershi	p \$35.00/ea		
☐ Individual Membership \$35.00/ea		If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's	
☐ Under 18 Membership	\$5.00/ea	name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an	
Under 18 Membership	\$5.00/ea	under 18 membership.	

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds PO Box Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634